



State of Delaware
Office of Auditor of Accounts
At a Glance

Case ID- Ref 07-017

July 23, 2007

Working Hard to Protect YOUR Tax Dollars

Why We Did This Review

The Office of Auditor of Accounts (AOA) received a HOTLINE complaint alleging that Laurel School Board member, Mr. Jerry White, interfered with District business in intimidating district officials into hiring his daughter for a position as a School Nurse within the District. In conjunction with these complaints, the AOA Special Investigations Section began an investigation.

Background

During the summer of 2003, the Laurel School District posted and interviewed for a school nurse at Dunbar Elementary School. Several candidates were interviewed, and at the conclusion of the interviews, the members of the interview team unanimously agreed to offer the school nurse position to a candidate other than Mr. White's daughter. Unhappy with their decision, Mr. White telephoned district employees, explaining to them that he was "disappointed in them" and that his daughter had a "young family that needed insurance." Although Mr. White never directly ordered that his daughter be hired, it became obvious during AOA investigatory interviews that Superintendent Duda and Principal Givens were intimidated into changing their selection in favor of Mr. White's daughter. It was noted that due to Mr. White's direct involvement, that the aforementioned District personnel feared losing their jobs had they not recommended Ms. Davis for hire.

For further information on this release, please contact:

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Laurel School District Special Investigation - Nepotism

What We Found

During the course of our investigation, we were able to substantiate the following information:

Mr. Jerry White, a Laurel School Board member, used his position as a member of the School Board to obtain District employment for his daughter, Ms. Jennifer Davis, after her unsuccessful attempt to gain District employment as a School Nurse at Dunbar Elementary School in the Laurel School District.

After posting a position for a School Nurse at Dunbar Elementary School, members of the interview committee made their recommendation to offer the School Nurse position to a candidate other than Mr. White's daughter. After offering the position to the preferred candidate, Mr. White did, on separate occasions, telephone Laurel School District Superintendent, Mr. Keith Duda, and Laurel Middle School Principal, Ms. Jennifer Givens, advising that he was "unhappy" with their selection for the School Nurse position. Subsequent to these conversations, Mr. Duda rescinded the job offer to the other candidate, and opted to hire Mr. White's daughter for the position.

As a result of our Investigation, we forwarded on our findings to the Delaware State Public Integrity Commission for review and resolution.

What We Recommend

On July 10, 2007, we received an official Advisory Opinion (No. 07-04) from the Delaware State Public Integrity Commission (PIC). The PIC, thru this opinion, agreed with the AOA that Mr. White's conduct violated State Law. As a result of this violation, the PIC has issued a formal censure of Mr. White's conduct. The PIC report cites multiple precedents regarding abuses of power, nepotism, and other related case law as defined in Delaware Code.

Furthermore, members of the PIC found reason to believe that a violation of criminal law had occurred. The criminal law they point to being violated is the criminal restriction on reviewing or disposing of matters if there is a personal or private interest. (29 Del. C. § 5805(f))

The PIC opinion is an Advisory Opinion, and was issued to this Office at our request. Since receiving their Opinion, we have advised the School District, and now the Office of Attorney General (AG) for potential criminal prosecution.